

Health Promotion and Disease Prevention— 10 Years of Student Inventiveness

DORIS F. DROKE

Ms. Droke is a Public Health Analyst in the Health Resources and Services Administration of the Public Health Service and

UNIVERSITY OF CINCINNATI
CINCINNATI, OHIO

JUN 11 1993

Program Officer for the Secretary's Award for Innovations in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention competition.

Tearsheet requests to **DEPOSITORY No. 4** Dr. Droke, 80-02 Parklawn Bldg., Rockville, MD 20857; tel. 301-443-6763.

IN 1981, A TEMPLE UNIVERSITY health education student submitted an idea to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that a competition be held among health professions students who submit innovative proposals for health promotion and disease prevention.

Richard S. Schweiker, Secretary of HHS at the time, approved the project and the first competition for the Secretary's Award for Innovations in Health Promotion and Disease Prevention was announced in May 1982. The first awards were made in 1983 and have been followed by annual awards each year since. *Public Health Reports* has published the top three winning entries and abstracts of the "honorable mentions" every year.

The publication in this issue of 1992's winning papers and abstracts of the runnersup marks the 10th anniversary of this rewarding program.

Over the years, winners from Maine to California and Alabama to Oregon have represented most of the 12 disciplines that are eligible to enter—medicine, osteopathic medicine, nursing, pharmacy, podiatric medicine, allied health, veterinary medicine, optometry, public health, health administration, health education, and dentistry.

Their projects have included AIDS prevention, child abuse and neglect, prevention of falls among the elderly, adolescent pregnancy, reducing morbidity and mortality in poor minority communities, smoking prevention and cessation, educating young blacks in the detection and prevention of hypertension, and teaching parents in homeless shelters to care for their children's health problems.

Early in the school year, posters and brochures about the contest are distributed to some 1,300 participating schools of the health professions. Further publicizing of the contest is carried out by the Federation of Associations of Schools of the Health Professions (FASHP) and its participating professional associations.

Each spring, students submit their papers to their advisors, and each school selects one paper to forward to the pertinent professional association. Each professional association reviews the papers from its constituent schools and submits up to 10 papers to FASHP, which appoints an interdisciplinary review committee to select up to 20 semifinal papers. These papers are then submitted to the Secretary of HHS for final selection of first-, second-, and third-place winners by a review committee chaired by the Administrator of the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) and consisting of senior HHS officials.

Authors of the top three winning papers each year and their advisors travel to Washington, DC, to participate in a special awards ceremony conducted by the Secretary, the Assistant Secretary for Health, and the Administrator of HRSA, during which the winners receive plaques and checks for \$5,000 for first place, \$4,000 for second, and \$3,000 for third.

While winners of the contest usually have chosen a career in one of the health professions by the time they submit their entry in the contest, many have found that the development of their proposals has provoked a keener interest in health promotion and disease prevention. Many have also found that the publicity they received as a result of the contest, as well as the publication of their winning papers, resulted in a significant number of inquiries from various locations throughout the United States about their projects and interests, which has notably increased their networking and collaboration with colleagues concerning health promotion and disease prevention.

Many winning proposals, either wholly or in part, have been implemented, such as the 1986 "Shots for Tots" project by Lila Stanger, RN, currently the Physical Health Director of District

Seven Health Department in Idaho Falls, ID. This project provided increased access to childhood immunizations through the use of a modified motor home. More than 30,000 immunizations have been administered in an eight-county, predominantly rural area of southeastern Idaho during the past 5 years. As a further service, the van is also staffed to provide cancer screening clinic services in the remote sites of the district served.

"Operation Sunday School," by the 1989 second-place winner, Anita L. Jackson, MD, has expanded into a comprehensive "Hope for Health" campaign. In this church-based project to educate African American youths about hypertension, children ages 6 to 16 were trained to conduct blood pressure screenings of adults in their church.

Dr. Jackson reports that winning the 1989 Secretary's award contest reinforced her desire to create innovative, comprehensive preventive health programs to serve communities at risk and fostered her interest in combining public health with her future career as an otorhinolaryngologist.

The "Boston's Codman Square Community Partnership for Health Promotion" proposal of the 1990 first-place winner, Anthony L. Schlaff, MD, MPH, is currently implemented in modified form at the Codman Square Health Center in Boston. Dr. Schlaff proposed a program to promote changes in individual behavior and community relationships to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with the many problems affecting poor, minority communities in the United States. Of particular emphasis and concern were violence, injuries, substance abuse, AIDS, infant mortality, child abuse and neglect, and cardiovascular disease.

After it won the 1990 contest, Dr. Schlaff's project was amplified and funded as a demonstration project with \$1,125,000 from the W. K. Kellogg Foundation with a start-up date of September 1991. Dr. Schlaff attributes to a considerable extent his ability to obtain this funding to the prestige his project received as a result of the contest.

One winning project that is currently being implemented with particular success is the 1991 entry, "A Social Marketing Campaign to Promote Low-fat Milk Consumption in an Inner-City Latino Community," by Howell Wechsler, MPH, and Steven M. Wernick, MEd. This program was in the process of being implemented at the time of entry into the contest, by the Washington Heights-Inwood Healthy Heart Program in a low-income, inner-city, Latino community in New York City.

Dr. Wechsler reports that project staff members

have spent considerable time designing and conducting evaluation studies on the availability of low-fat milk in neighborhood grocery stores as well as students' milk selection and consumption in elementary school cafeterias. The results of these studies will be published in future editions of peer-reviewed journals. As an extension of his project, Dr. Wechsler will be directing an evaluation study of his school low-fat milk education work for his doctoral dissertation. He also reports that the East Harlem Healthy Heart Program in New York City ran a highly successful low-fat milk campaign in its community in 1992 as an outgrowth of his project. Early that year, Cable News Network aired a report on studies on the value of low-fat milk for children older than age 2. Much of the report centered around a day care center directly involved in this project.

Michelle Bardack and Susan Thompson, 1992 third-place winners, have also implemented their project, "The Rush Prenatal Program at St. Basil's Free Peoples Clinic: Personal Learning and Development through Active Community Service." The clinic, located on Chicago's south side, is providing badly needed prenatal and obstetrical care and delivery to indigent women.

First place winners in 1992 were Patsi Albright and Karen Wall Toy, nursing students at York College of Pennsylvania, for "Breast Self-examination for Visually Impaired Women."

There was a tie for second place between Gary Podschun of San Diego State University in California and three students from Boston University's School of Public Health, Andrea Rudolph, Victoria Kahan, and Michelle Bordeu. Their proposal was "Cervical Cancer Prevention Project for Inner City Black and Latina Women." Mr. Podschun's was "Teen Peer Outreach Street Work Project: HIV Prevention Education for Runaway and Homeless Youth."

The 15 honorable mention proposals ranged from control of sexually transmitted disease among migrant farm workers to addressing the needs of the communication impaired at the pharmacy.

It has been indeed gratifying to those of us working with the contest over the past 10 years to hear from student winners for whom the contest has had a highly positive impact on their health careers, leading to innovative work in health promotion and disease prevention. There is every reason to expect that the program will continue to be successful and that future winners will make meaningful contributions to the myriad facets of health promotion and disease prevention.